



**State Chaplain**  
**Fr. Henry W. Reid**

With all the insanity and disruption of 2020, many of us are eagerly waiting for the end of the year. Of course, the Church is far ahead of everyone and we ended the year just after thanksgiving. With the first Sunday of Advent we begin again, new Church year, new beginnings, new opportunities to deepen our Faith.

Having had the opportunity to join one of our National president's meetings with the states presidents, I was extremely impressed by the involvement of our brothers throughout the US. We are forced by the Covid restrictions to turn more and more to online and other alternatives to meetings and other activities. We have witnessed/participated in two state board meetings and a national convention online, and even though it was not the same, business was taken care of. Our Faith life is challenged in similar ways.

After the initial shutdown of the parishes we had to adjust to new ways of doing things. Many parishes offered Mass online, Catholic courses are aplenty and I have been saying the Rosary daily since the beginning of June. FORMED, which is billed as a Catholic Netflix, offered by the Augustinian institute, provides many people with a way to deepen their faith life. For those interested, a free subscription is available through my parish's website, just go to <https://olmcpatchogue.org>, scroll down to FORMED and follow the instructions.

As we continue to prepare for the coming of Christ in the flesh, December 25th, and face the possibility of another shutdown, let's take the opportunity, and use this time, to deepen our relationship with Christ and one another. With each other we may need to do virtually, with Christ is always reality.

In Christ and our motto, Fr. Henry

**President**  
**Thomas A. Lambert**

Brothers: I hope you are all staying safe in these uncertain times! We recently held our first hybrid NYS State Board meeting. It was good to be in the company of our NYS Brothers both in person and virtually! Your State Board Officers worked hard to arrange for the hybrid meeting. I would like to express my thanks to our NYS Secretary Tom O'Donnell and Webmaster Kevin Cummings, for their time and effort in preparation for our meeting. As we continue our journey towards the eventual elimination of the deadly Covid-19 virus, let us keep those affected by this pandemic in our prayers; victims as well as those who are working hard on the front lines in fighting this horrible virus.

Until recently, prior governmental restrictions were being eased. Division and County Presidents were beginning

to schedule in-person meetings after having only virtual meetings. So long as social distancing restrictions were being observed, this slow return to “the way it was” was great news! There did not appear to be any issues with these meetings. We will need to monitor the recent spike in Covid-19 cases to determine if we need to take a step back in in-person meetings. Direct contact with our AOH Brothers is the glue that keeps our Order together. It is hoped that we will be able to continue the meetings. Also, please try to regularly check in on your AOH Brothers who are not able to attend meetings either in person or remotely.

As I have previously indicated, recruitment and retention of members MUST continue to be a focus of our efforts in the coming year, despite the current pandemic. Every single Division and County Board throughout the State MUST increase efforts to grow the membership of our Order! I am again asking all District Directors to work with the Divisions and County Boards within their Districts to make this happen. Growth of 5 to 10 percent is possible. Tim recently sent out an email detailing incentives from the National AOH for increasing our membership. Please reach out to me, or to our National Director/State Organizer, Tim McSweeney with any questions. We need growth to insure our future as the preeminent Irish Catholic Organization in our great state and country! Many Divisions are involved with fundraising for food banks and other worthwhile endeavors to help others in this time of need. What a perfect way to attract future Brothers!

Despite the current restrictions, I hope you and your family have a Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas.

**Vice President**  
**John J. Manning**

I hope that you and your families are staying healthy and safe during these uncertain times. As we all know these past several months have been a struggle for many, both financially and health concerns, but someday I truly feel that we will all get through this together. Please Keep the Faith!!!!!!

I am happy to report that our fellow Brother and Sister Hibernians in Syracuse NY are gearing up for a wonderful 2021 Biennial New York State AOH/LAOH Convention starting on Wednesday July 7, 2021 and concluding on Sunday July 11, 2021 that will be held at the Downtown Syracuse Marriott. Each night is \$135.00 per night, and the hotel is now taking reservations at the below link. The deadline for the 2021 NYS AOH/LAOH Convention is Monday June 21, 2021. Reservations: <https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1592834810659&key=GRP>

The New York and New Jersey State Boards hosted a Memorial Mass and Bronze Plaque Unveiling on Saturday September 25, 2020 at 11:00 AM for the 18 Brother and Sister Hibernians that made the Supreme Sacrifice on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. The Pastor at St. Peters Church located at 22 Barclay Street, just steps away from the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, has agreed to allow the New York State Ancient Order of Hibernians to permanently mount this Bronze Plaque onto one of the interior walls in St. Peters Church for all to visit, and too “Never Forget”.

On Friday August 14, 2020, the New York State Ancient Order of Hibernians held a golf outing fund raiser at the Silver Lake Golf Course on Staten Island, in which I am happy to report that a total of \$9,823.31 was raised. I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to my fellow Brother Hibernians from Richmond County AOH & Kings County AOH, and especially to Brian Cassidy (Kings County), Larry Cummings and John Dick (Richmond County) for their hard work, dedication and tireless efforts in order for us to get this fund raiser off the ground in less than three weeks’ time. It was a great and successful day by all 129 golfers.

I hope by now many of the County and Division Boards across New York State have returned to meeting in person or are holding Zoom meetings. It is especially important that we as an organization try and return to what was once normal, and of course with following all of the New York State COVID-19 compliance and social distancing requirements that our NYS elected officials have ruled on.

At the 2019 fall meeting I had coordinated three football pools to help raise funds for the 2020 National AOH Convention, and a total of \$3,000.00 dollars had been raised. These funds were specially designated for the entertainment for the four nights at the New York State Hospitality room. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the National AOH Convention that was supposed to take place in Orlando Florida was postponed. These funds that were raised will now be designated for the 2022 National AOH Convention that will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

If your County or Division is interested in hosting a Major Degree of our Order, once we are able to hold one, please contact any of the Major Degree Teams that are here in New York State.

1) Cu Chulainn Celtic Warriors Major Degree Team (Richmond County)

Point of Contact: Brother Hibernian Michael McGroarty  
253 Malvine Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10307  
(646) 533-1495  
E-Mail: [macsolo1623@gmail.com](mailto:macsolo1623@gmail.com)

2) Schenectady Major Degree Team (Schenectady County)

Point of Contact: Brother Hibernian Owen Cole  
738 Swaggertown Road  
Scotia, NY 12302  
(518) 399-1269  
E-Mail: [omcole54@gmail.com](mailto:omcole54@gmail.com)

3) Tara Court Major Degree Team (Suffolk County)

Point of Contact: Brother Hibernian Jeff Nisler  
33 Corlett Place  
Huntington Station, NY 11746  
(631) 385-2425  
E-Mail: [jeff.aoh@nisler.com](mailto:jeff.aoh@nisler.com)

We currently have 3 “Junior AOH Divisions”, (Suffolk County) Babylon Division 2, (Chemung County) Elmira Division 1, and (Orange County) Monroe Division 1. If any of our Brother Hibernians are interested in forming a “New Junior Division” please contact me. As per our National AOH Constitution Article V, Section 1, all you need is 5 New Applicants to form a new Junior Division. We all know it’s our youth that will continue the traditions of our order as we grow. Without our youth, the Ancient Order of Hibernians has no future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if there is anything you need, or if I can be of assistance. I can be reached at [jmanningsaoh@gmail.com](mailto:jmanningsaoh@gmail.com), call or text (917) 589-0047.

Wishing all my Fellow Brother Hibernians and their families a Merry Christmas and Happy & Healthy New Year in 2021.

**Secretary**

**Thomas M. O’Donnell**

It was a pleasure to have seen many of our Brother Hibernians at the recent NYS AOH Semi-Annual Board Meeting in East Durham (both in person and virtually). I have been continuing to update the list of officers for our order. Please check the NYS AOH Website for the current list of NYS Officers, County and Division Officers with addresses, phone numbers, and E-Mail addresses. If there are any errors, please contact me.

2020 is coming to an end very shortly, and it will be time for all divisions to file new Form 9's, Form 11's, and NYS Charities and Missions Reports. I am sending a package to all NYS AOH Division Presidents that includes the NYS Division Financial Membership Report (Form 11), NYS Certificate of Election Report (Form 9), and the NYS AOH Charities and Mission Report Form. **Please use the NYS forms and not the National versions for filing your NYS reports.**

NYS AOH per capita charges are discounted by 50 cents per Brother Hibernian for Divisions whose filings are post marked by January 31, 2021. Please send me completed NYS AOH Form 9, NYS AOH Form 11, and NYS AOH Charities and Missions Report. An updated form 9 of your elected and appointed officers is important for keeping our contact information current. **Please file an updated Form 9 even if the names of the officers have not changed.**

At this time I would like to wish all of my Brother Hibernians and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year. God Bless.

**Treasurer**  
**Thomas Beirne**

I hope that you and your families may experience the joy of the upcoming Christmas season. I wish you all a Joyous Christmas with quality time with your families, and a safe New Year. We could all use some joy celebrating the birth of our savior this year. Many people are anxious about the pandemic and the uncertain economic impacts of it. Our shared Catholic faith sustained our Irish ancestors through difficult times for many generations; both in Ireland and as immigrants in America. This year let us forgo some of the materialistic and secular aspects of the Holidays and focus on the spiritual, our families, and the reason for the Season. Our Catholic Churches are struggling now and Hibernians need to step up once again to protect and help our clergy and Churches. Let us all try to increase our awareness of our fellow Hibernians, their families, and those in our communities that are suffering during these trying times, or have lost a loved one. Our Organization originated as a charitable and benevolent organization and we must continue in that role. As Hibernians, we need to keep up and if possible expand the Christian Charity aspect of our motto. It is hard to believe we are approaching the end of 2020 and still being impacted by COVID-19 after over 9 months. New York Hibernians working together will come through this and hopefully rebound stronger.

It was great seeing many of the Brothers from around NY State participating in the Fall State Board Meeting held in East Durham on October 31<sup>st</sup>; both those present in person and those that participated virtually. Unfortunately we were not able to conduct the planned Testimonial Dinner and show our appreciation for NY State President's Tom Lambert and Mary Beth Durkee. The Testimonial Dinner will be rescheduled, and details will be forwarded as they become available. I strongly encourage all jurisdictions and Officers to engage their membership; have meetings either in person if possible (taking all precautions to protect members), a hybrid of part in person part virtual, or fully virtual. Also communication is critical, send emails, written correspondence, phone calls, text messages, and check up on your older and vulnerable members. I am glad to see Divisions throughout the State are continuing with nominations, elections, and installations of Officers. Please complete the Form 9, Certificate of Election, and forward it to Tom O'Donnell, NY State AOH Secretary.

Divisions should be reviewing and updating their rosters, collecting dues, and planning on paying their per-capita in the beginning of 2021 to the National Board and the NY State Board for 2020.

I look forward to meeting fellow Hibernians at upcoming meetings and events. Plans are well under way for **the 2021 NY State Convention in Syracuse from July 7<sup>th</sup> to July 10<sup>th</sup>**. The city of Syracuse and the Local Hibernians are working hard to welcome us all and it promises to be a great convention.

Stay safe and strong Brothers. Have a joyous Christmas and In Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity we will come back stronger than ever.

**May Saint Patrick Bless and Protect You and Your Families.**

## **District 1**

### **Kevin O'Reilly**

Hibernian's in the Capital District are generally doing well and continue to adapt to the Corona-19 situation that we are all in. Reminding all of the Brother's to be generous to Project St. Patrick. We are fortunate that we have two Seminarians from our District, one each from Albany and Saratoga. Hopefully these Brothers can benefit from the Project. We will see some new leadership in the District with the Presidents of Albany and Saratoga retiring.

Looking forward to the State Convention in Syracuse July 2021, we can only hope we will be on the other side of Covid-19 and its restrictions.

**Albany:** President Tim Weklar. Thank You Tim for your well-done work as President. The Division has been able to continue most of its charitable work through to Covid-19. Included in this is the ongoing work at the Capital City Rescue Mission, Regional Food Bank and Capital District Irish American Association (CDIAA), owner of their Hall. They have stepped up their support to the CDIAA, in addition to the significant donation earlier this year; they are donating 50% of the monthly CDIAA Mortgage payment on the Hall. The annual FFAI event has been cancelled for 2020 and rescheduled to the spring of 2021. For FFAI, they are raffling off a Toboggan of Cheer, \$10 per ticket. The incoming President for 2021 is Ciaran Geraghty who is moving up from VP. Installation is scheduled for December 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hall following Mass at the Cathedral. Due to the Covid-19 there will not be the traditional dinner and specific plans are still being developed. It does look like some appetizers and cash bar are the starting point of the planning.

**Schenectady:** President John Humphrey. The Division is continuing their FFAI fundraising effort through curbside food events. The annual Army/Navy game Tailgate Party December 12<sup>th</sup> will need to be modified due to Covid but a good time is still expected. Their Annual Golf Tournament is scheduled for June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021; hopefully the current restrictions will be relaxed by then. John will be repeating as President. Installation is November 21<sup>st</sup> in the evening at their Hall. (LAOH is doing their installation earlier in the day) Details being worked out.

**Troy:** President Peter Durkee. Peter is holding Troy steady and will be repeating as President for 2021. The Division will hold their Installation December 12<sup>th</sup> and due to Covid they are doing an invitation only Installation.

**Watervliet:** President Mark Scully. Mark will be repeating as President for 2021. The Division is again holding their Christmas Tree Sales to benefit charities in their area. The Division has covered the operating costs of the Columbkil Association, which owns their Hall, since the onset of Covid restrictions and will continue do so until no longer necessary. Officer and Installation info is still in process.

**East Durham:** President – John Gallagher (acting). National Organizer Tim McSweeney continues working with us to rebuild the Division numbers. Many thanks to both Tim and National Director Liam McNabb, and all of the District's Division President's as we all work in support of the efforts to rebuild Green County.

**Saratoga:** President Tim McNulty. Thank You Tim for your well-done work as President. Tim is having physical meetings and is continuing to broadcast these meetings on ZOOM. Participation on the ZOOM is minimal since the in-person meetings began but it is still a tool for the members to take advantage of if they choose. Again, Covid sets the stage for planning their annual Christmas Gala and Installation. They are considering holding their installation during the Christmas event if it is held. Details to be worked out and passed on. The annual golf tour-

nament will be held September 12, 2021 at Saratoga Lake Golf Course. History repeats itself as Past President Don McHenry is returning to the President position for 2021.

## **Summer project, 2020: The Shrine and Cemetery of Saint Joseph Town of Bleeker, Fulton County, New York**

*The primary focus of this project was to participate in maintenance of the Shrine and Cemetery sites of the first Roman Catholic Church in Fulton County, New York. The sites were established in 1854-1858.*

In the summer of 1965, Saratoga AOH Past President Dave Cummings' father "encouraged" him to assist a visiting Franciscan Brother to clean up a shrine and cemetery near the family's Caroga Lake summer home; it was penance for some dumb, adolescent deed. Some 55 years later, AOH Brother Dave encouraged his Brother Hibernians to help tidy up the same two historical sites.

To commemorate the June 9, 2020 Feast of St. Columbkil, the Saratoga Hibernians gathered at the Cemetery for a work party. On a humorous note, one of the Volunteers had used their Cellphone GPS to navigate to the Cemetery and once there the GPS announced: "You have reached your final destination"....

Work began and the AOH crew weed-whacked and mowed the two-acre cemetery parcel. They sawed and wood-chipped the downed tree fall at the Shrine. They recruited a person to power wash the structure, moved two church pews to the site and assessed necessary masonry repair of the Shrine.

Bleecker's 1850 Roman Catholic population of German, Prussian, Irish and Hungarians desired a place of worship. They were farmers, loggers, gold miners and leather tannery workers. Almost all were naturalized citizens. They donated land and built Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in 1856-1858. They opened the adjacent cemetery. By doctrine, Catholics were only to be buried in their own cemetery. The church was a two-story white building, with a white altar and a choir loft. A square tower housed its bell and a crucifix was mounted on the structure's peak. The parishioners built an attached shelter for the visiting Franciscan priests. They added an outbuilding for protection of the horses and wagons. With the clearing of the surrounding forest, the steeple could be seen for five miles in any direction and the peal of the bells could be heard a like distance. There have been 95 parishioners interred in the cemetery. Ancestral researchers can appreciate the multiple spellings and variations in the names and the dates between the gravestone tablet etchings and historical index recordings and census documents.

Albany and Syracuse-based Franciscan priests ventured to Bleeker to conduct Mass and to provide religious instructions for the children. By 1919, deterioration of Saint Joseph's Church continued. The German-born trustees had already received additional funding from their Irish parishioners. Together, they decided to dismantle the structure. Two new chapels were built from salvaged materials. Caroga Lake's Saint Barbara's Chapel received the crucifix for its peak. The Bleeker Center Chapel received the steeple bell. Both sites have been private homes for a few decades, but the bell is mounted in a tower at the rear of Saint Clare's rectory in Colonie, New York. Some foundation field stones were used to create a corbeled, domed structure on the St. Joseph's Church site for a Silver Jubilee Celebration in 1933; Bishop Gibbons presided over the ceremony. The domed structure protects a bronze statue of Saint Joseph holding Baby Jesus. St. Joseph is the patron saint of Departing Souls.



The Saratoga Hibernians "departed" the setting that beautiful June 2020 day, but left feeling very rewarded and in a state of grace for their efforts. Plans continue to repair the Shrine and reset many of the grave tablets. Next summer, the Saratoga Division clergy members will co-celebrate a service at the Shrine with Fulton County Priests.

They invite you to share the event in your visit to the First Catholic Church in Fulton County. Repair work done in 2020 of the baby Elisabeth Seidl can be seen in the before and after pictures

We know the State Board does their best for making all of our events as safe as possible and thank them for doing so.

## **District 2**

### **Craig E. Speers**

During the violent civil disturbances in Buffalo in early June 2020, rioters desecrated the beautiful building of St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church. This classic structure located directly behind Buffalo City Hall on Staat Street near city fire headquarters, has stood as a proud symbol of the Italian community in the city for 120 years.

Tragically, during these riots, anarchists descended on the city's main square starting arson fires and vandalizing key buildings in Niagara Square. Buffalo City Hall, the President William McKinley Memorial Monument, the City Court Building and the Justice Jackson Federal Court house were attacked and vandalized during this unrest.

St. Anthony's Church suffered thousands of dollars in damage in which obscenities were spray painted on the church building. As a result the parish was forced to pay one thousand dollars in deductible, in addition to thousands of dollars in repair costs that were covered by their insurance policies.

After learning of the monetary loss suffered by this parish, AOH Buffalo Division No. 1 decided to act. We contacted Father Mike Zuffeetto and volunteered to assist. At our division meeting we discussed the situation and decided to help the parish. Division One voted to contribute one hundred dollars to the effort, the NYS AOH District Two Director, also contributed one hundred dollars, but the bulk of the relief funds came from Past Division One President and current Standing Committee Chairman Jim O'Brien who contributed eight hundred dollars to the fund.

On Saturday November 14th Division Officers including NYS AOH President Tom Lambert, Division One President Kevin Lafferty, Past Division President Jim O'Brien, Division Financial Secretary Kevin McNamara, and Division Marshall Craig E. Speers, presented the contribution to Father Mike in a ceremony prior to the 4 PM Mass. Jim O'Brien delivered remarks to the assembled parishioners. In his remarks he emphasized he need to apprehend those responsible for these felonious acts of destruction and religious intolerance.

I know that other parishes in our state have been similarly violated in this manner. Again I must emphasize that all brothers should be alert to any acts of destruction or vandalism or arson committed against our parish churches, schools or shrines....be vigilant...stay alert...check on your local parishes when you have the opportunity.

I would also encourage all divisions, if they have not already done so, to resume divisional meetings, whether in person, via teleconference or zoom or a mixture of in person and electronic communications. We need to maintain the fabric of the order even in this most challenging times.

We continue to mourn the loss in September of Bill Powers, Bill served the NYS AOH, NYS AOH District Two and Buffalo Division One for over four decades. He was a supporter, friend and mentor to many Hibernians. Bill battled leukemia, for several years, before being afflicted with pneumonia and C-19. Bill held many AOH offices on the state and local levels, including District Two Director, Division One President, and Division Election Chair. In addition Bill was instrumental in assisting the WNY Irish Famine Commemoration Committee with the construction and maintenance of the memorial and the memorial site at the Buffalo Harbor in the Erie Basin Marina Park. In fact Bill could often be seen cutting the grass and trimming weeds around the site. There was no job that Bill could and would not tackle for his community. Bill had a long and successful career in the commercial and personal insurance field in Clarence, New York. Bill was known as a friend to all, due to his uncanny ability to make friends and tell great stories, including those of life growing up in Pearl Creek, Wyoming County, in

Western New York. He graduated from Pavilion Central High School and Niagara University (Vincentian) in Lewiston, New York on an ROTC scholarship. He served on active duty with the U.S. Army in Germany. A Life AOH member, Bill leaves behind his wife Sue, and three sons - Jon, Pat and Bill, and numerous grandchildren.

Defend the Sanctity of Life! Never surrender the basic tenets of our faith to the forces of evil!

## **District 3**

### **Phil O'Neil**

AOH NY District 3 – Utica, Syracuse, Auburn, Oswego, Watertown, Fulton

Fund raising to support Irish causes such as FFAI and local division community and scholarships remain a serious challenge.

All reporting Divisions have returned to in person meetings. This is a welcome return to a degree of “normal” for the Order and our lives.

The John F. Kennedy Division, Auburn, NY reports that the Hall is operating with a downturn in patrons. The Auburn Division has stepped up their efforts in activities with a meat raffle, gun raffle and fish dinners for takeout. All these events historically have attracted big crowds to the Hall. These events will not have attendees because of covid restrictions. Auburn hosted Syracuse for the Mega 50/50 raffle drawing. The Brothers and Sisters at Auburn sold out their allotment of 50/50 tickets. This drawing is traditionally held at the Syracuse Irish Fest, which was cancelled.

The Commodore John Barry Division, Syracuse, NY. Mega 50/50 drawing ticket sales exceeded expectations. This raffle replaced the traditional Yankee v Red Sox raffle. Syracuse sent a thank you notice to Auburn to be posted in the Auburn Hall. 2021 Convention Committee chairman Bob Bunce presented a convention update to the recent State Board meeting. The Convention website should up and running soon.

The Dean Michael Barry Division, Oswego, NY. Continues with their long and dedicated history and efforts in Division activities and community outreach. Almost all the current efforts are presented to the Oswego general population. The Divisions reputation as an involved and welcoming organization makes the events a success. The roster of events: Hosting Red Cross blood drive, participation in the Oswego Speedway drive thru Trick or Treat event, Golabki Polish dinner take out, Thanksgiving Pie sale and Sunday Football wings and burgers in hall and take out. These are just in the last couple of months. Outstanding!! The Oswego Division supported the Syracuse Mega 50/50 raffle and sold out their ticket allotment.

The John C. Devereux Division, Utica, NY. The Utica division continues to work closely with The Irish Cultural Center to promoter Irish history, language and culture. Recent events at the Center were: Songs of Irish History 9/17 and Genealogy Event 10/16. The Divisions 24<sup>th</sup> Annual AOH Joe White Golf Outing was held on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>. This event had tremendous sponsorship support form Utica area businesses and community. The Division mourns the passing of long time spiritual leader Father Richard Dellos from covid 19 on 8/11/20. Division monthly meeting date has been changed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month.

The Msgr. James Ruddy Division, Watertown, NY. The Division sponsors and promotes an Irish Road Bowling League in Watertown that has member and community participation. A League session was recently featured on a local TV station. Division President Bill Flynn reports that they will be sponsoring 8 Turkey Dinners in conjunction with St. Mary's Food Pantry in Evans Mills, NY. The Msgr. Ruddy Division remains an unrivaled promotor of Irish culture and history in Northern NY state.

We continue to adapt and react in District 3 with Prayer, Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity

## **District 4**

### **Bob Nolan**

Again this year the NYS AOH will be selling Irish themed calendars for 2021 through the District Directors of each region. As of this writing I already have commitments from my Brothers to purchase 53 of the 63 calendars forwarded by NYS AOH past president and calendar coordinator, Brother Peter Durkee. Anyone interested in purchasing calendars should contact me directly.

As of this writing, I have participated thru zoom in meetings of the New York and Bronx County boards as well as division meetings of NY-Div. 1 and 7, Bronx-Div. 3, I have also been briefed by Westchester County division 1-Yonkers and division-18 Peekskill and participated in their November 5 meeting. During these difficult times our counties and divisions should be meeting as the work of our Order continues.

#### **The Bronx**

##### **Bronx County Irish Mass**

On September 12 at St. Barnabas Church, under the leadership of Martin Galvin, the 3rd annual Bronx Irish Mass was celebrated by the Pastor, Fr. Brian Fitzgerald. Dozens of Hibernians attended including LAOH National President Karen Keane, National Director Tim McSweeney, NYS Vice-President John Manning, NYS Treasurer Tom Beirne, District #4 Director Bob Nolan and District #5 Director Steve Kiernan, Dolores Desch and Joan Moore, National and State FFAI Chair's. Brothers Dermot Moore, Roger Slattery and Patrick O'Hara were the pipers. Sean Ruane organized the music which was led by the Dawn Doherty School of Music. More than 7,000 persons participated in the celebration by way of Facebook! Special thanks to Bronx division # 5 president Ray Leyden for his assistance.

The County met thru zoom on September 9 to discuss business especially the upcoming Irish Mass. President Galvin announced that the annual County dinner scheduled for November 22 at Rory's had to be cancelled. The dinner has been rescheduled for Sunday, November 21, 2021, 3 p.m. at Rory Dolan's.

Roger Fahey, President, Bronx Division 3 chaired a zoom meeting on October 21. The division discussed fundraising options and the impact of the virus. They also purchased four calendars. I presented a report on County and State events.. Jack McCarrick, President, Division #4, is working on a meeting date.

#### **New York County**

President Dennis Grogan called a meeting thru zoom on September 24. Divisions reported they were setting up meetings in October while Div. 1 has been meeting since the spring. NYS AOH State Secretary Tom O'Donnell as well as State Treasurer Tom Beirne joined the meeting. Both gave updates on the national convention and reported that the State meeting will go forward on October 31 in East Durham but the President's dinner has been rescheduled till the spring. (Later, it was announced that the state meeting would be in person-limited to 50-and virtual.) The organization of the State convention scheduled for July in Syracuse continues. Past National Director Dan Dennehy provided an update on Immigration. The county voted to purchase 4 calendars.

President Grogan held a successful meeting of the County Board on Thursday, Oct. 22, 7 p.m. at the Archbishop John Hughes Center at the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral. Brothers also participated thru zoom. Discussion included the annual Wreaths across America remembrance on December 19 at 12 Noon. Updates were given by Tom Beirne and Bob Nolan.

NY County Thomas Rogers division #1, led by Division President, Bill Lee, met on August 1 and October 5 by Zoom. In October, the division welcomed Brothers Dan Dennehy and Tom Beirne as well as myself to their meet-

ing. Dan reported on the national convention and Tom reported on the State's fall meeting scheduled for October 31 in East Durham. Also, the Brothers voted to purchase several calendars for 2021. Nomination of Officers occurred and the slate will be before the division in November.

NY County division #7, led by President Jim Tracy, met on October 7 by zoom. NYS Treasurer Tom Beirne, County President Dennis Grogan, as well as myself, participated in the meeting. The division will be volunteering at the meat loaf kitchen in the Lower East Side on November 28. The division sponsors the extremely successful Celtic Cruise which benefits the Emerald Isle Immigration Center and is scheduled for June 9, 2021. Each year this popular event raises more than \$50,000 for EIIC.

NY County division # 9 President Martin Beirne stated that he is planning a meeting over the next few weeks.

## Westchester County

We mourn the passing of Vic Versace immediate past president and current treasurer of division 18 Peekskill. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

County President Brian Duffy will schedule a meeting of the County board in the next few weeks.

Division #1 Yonkers, led by President Dennis O'Brien, sponsored a successful golf outing on October 9 and met a few days before to coordinate final details. The funds raised will be spent assisting various charitable causes. The division purchased 8 calendars for 2021. Thank you Brothers.

Clive Cronin, President, Division #18 Peekskill, reported that there was discussion of the inhumane and disgraceful treatment afforded Malachy McAllister by the federal government. There was a report on FFAI check presentations-see Martin Galvin report. Although the firefighter Mike O'Hanlon golf outing was held October 20 the annual county dinner had to be postponed due to the pandemic. It will be rescheduled for next year at same time.

Stay healthy and wear a mask!

## **District 5**

### **Steve Kiernan**

Wishing all a very Merry Christmas and hopefully a much better New Year. We need to roll up our sleeves in 2021 and really show what we are made of. It's what we signed up for. We can do it, together. We have Unity.

At the close of 2020, each of the District 5 County Presidents are reporting exactly the same with respect to events, planned events...Nothing. The ever changing restrictions placed on this region of New York are putting a damper on us all. All are reporting regular meetings, most virtual.

Richmond County President Thomas Gray says the County is looking for a new home since they lost their long time meeting place at the Alba House due to staff transferred to Ohio. Alba House is now a storage facility; Many fond memories of meetings and gatherings at the Alba House.

The Irish Echo has named and recognized Kings County President Eddie Velinskie a recipient of the 2020 Irish Echo Community Champion Award. The Worthy County President is recognized for the work he has done over the course of the summer during the Covid-19 pandemic. Eddie coordinated, along with Father Dwayne Davis, the operation of the Saint Thomas Food Distribution, which was from April through September. 72,000 people fed, 40,000+ families received boxes of food, over 2000 Hibernian volunteer man hours clocked. Two hospitals received meals for their staff, donated by Kings County AOH. This act of Christian Charity, amongst many other

acts Eddie does on a regular basis, is why he was nominated for this honor.

Looking forward to installing new Division Officers for the new Division administrations, I'm available to any Division, if asked. Praying 2021 is a good year. Saint Patrick, pray for us. Saint Brigid, pray for us.

## **District 6**

### **Sean O'Rourke**

Greetings from Long Island. First, I would like to extend prayers to the families and loved ones of AOH members we have lost to the scourge of this virus. I would like to thank Suffolk County president Christopher Thompson and Nassau County president Jack O'Brien on their great jobs of getting back to in person county board meetings. The presidents are making sure that the proper social distancing procedures are being used.

### **Nassau County**

**Division 7:** June 15, 2020 Commodore George Coleman DeKay Ceremony / Food Drive

**Division 8:** is going forward planning a St. Patrick's Day Parade for Glen Cove.

**Division 11:** Held several food drives and held their a Golf Outing September 12th.

**Division 14:** Held their second annual Pro-Life Rosary on Saturday, October 17. It was held outdoors at the Det. Steven McDonald Garden of Forgiveness.

**AOH Div. 15:** Hibernian Hall is available to hold meetings there, following Covid-19 protocol. The Hall hosted all Feis meetings, Raffle Drawings, Friday Socials and more for the Hibernians.

These Socials are more important than ever. Not just for critical AOH business, but socialization and group morale at this time. The Division ran a food collection over the summer and is presently collecting goods for Thanksgiving Baskets.

**Division 17:** Long Beach Irish Day was Saturday, October 3, there was the usual Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Island Park. It was well attended with the LAOH & AOH taking every available seat. It was followed by a short march with the pipes and color guard.

Orders are being taken for memorial bricks to pave the area around the Celtic Cross memorial at the Hibernian Plaza.

**Division 19:** Currently working on an improvement project at the local St. Peter of Alcantara Church. They are doing a membership drive as well.

**Division 20:** Had masks designed and printed for their members, they had a half day Golf & Dine October 23rd . On Saturday, November 7, they hosted an Irish Language Mass in New Hyde Park

Members from all Divisions attended the Stand Up For Life and various other Pro Life activities this October for Respect Life Month.

### **NYC Saint Patrick's Day Parade:**

It was decided Nassau is sending Deacon Tom Costello as Aide to the Grand Marshal. With the New Year celebrations in Times Square canceled due to the Pandemic, the big question for us is, "will the NYC St. Patrick's Day

Parade be next"? As we write to you, we do not know! The NYC Committee hosted a meeting for delegates on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, at 7:00 pm via Zoom to keep the AOH informed.

## **Suffolk County**

**Divisions 2 and 8:** Working with the President and Charities and Missions Chairman of Division 2, the Hibernian Riders held a food drive at St Patrick's Division 2, Babylon NY on October 18, 2020. The Hibernian Riders comprised of members from Div. 2 and Div. 8 were honored to host and collect food by means of drop off only to benefit The United Veterans Beacon House of Bayshore, NY. We were blessed to have Hibernian Brothers and Sisters along with multiple motorcycle clubs throughout Suffolk County, contribute groceries for this worthy cause. Knights on Bikes, Legion Riders, Punishers LEMC, Sacred Thunder, US Veterans MC, and Christian Motorcycle Association to name a few

**Division 9:** On 11/7/2020 held a Spaghetti Dinner Fund raiser. Members were spread out inside the hall and outside around the fire pit. All of the money was donated to Infant Jesus Food Pantry in run up to Thanksgiving!

Divisions in both Suffolk and Nassau have been having in person meetings and some have been having virtual meetings. Let's hope and pray that the virus keeps trending on a downward trend so we can get back to normalcy. Please stay safe and all the best to you and your families.

**Please keep our brother and sister Hibernians who are members of Law Enforcement and Front-Line Workers in your prayers. May they all have safe tours of duty. Till next time, stay well. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**

## **District 7**

### **Timothy J. Tobin**

I hope this finds everyone in good health and looking forward to the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. Hopefully, we will all be able to return to full worship in our respective churches in the not too distant future. While the challenges brought by the pandemic continue, may we find the strength and spirit in our hearts to stay positive and to continue to share our many blessings with our fellow Hibernians and those in our community who may be in need of assistance. We continue our charitable work by supporting a local food bank, community kitchen, or a neighbor in need.

May we continue to keep those who protect us and our nation, as well as those who face struggles in life, and those who have gone before us, in our prayers. We mourn the loss of Father Lewis Brown, Chaplain of Chemung County Division 1, Monsignor John J. Lee Division who passed in September. May we live our daily lives in the motto of Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity.

**Broome County Division 1 of the AOH**, Monsignor Lawrence E. Giblin Division 1 is located at 148 Main St., Binghamton, NY. President: John Walker. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month.

The Monsignor Lawrence E. Giblin Division One Broome County is attempting at this point to survive the Pandemic that has affected so many across the world. Most of our fund-raising activities have been halted. No golf tournament or turkey parties as usually take place in the summer and fall. We are having our lottery in November. As most, we are dealing with this thing and it doesn't seem to be going away any time soon. We held an in-person meeting in September. Shortly thereafter, our hall had an exposure and several of our members became ill. Our prayers to them, most have recovered at this point. With that it prompted me not to hold our October meeting. We are currently looking to again meet in November and hold our officer election for 2021. We continue to support our Charities with monetary donations and look forward to a better 2021. I hope and pray that soon this virus will

end and we can raise a pint together. It has been a pleasure as president to share this with everyone and look to serving the AOH in a different role in the future. I look forward to wearing my Past President's pin with the Honor it deserves.

John Walker, Division President

**Chemung County Division 1 of the AOH**, Monsignor John J. Lee Division is located in Elmira, New York. President, Patrick "Packy" McFarland. Division Meetings are the Second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Hibernian Center, 701 Kinyon St., Elmira, New York.

The Msgr. John J. Lee Division of Chemung County has been fairing the COVID-19 storm quite well. Unfortunately, like most other divisions we were forced to cancel or postpone all of our large events for the year. Most notably our annual Half Way to St. Patrick's Day Festival, which occurs on the closest Saturday to September 17<sup>th</sup> (half way to St. Patrick's Day). This event normally draws hundreds of people from our community and beyond and includes, live Irish music, dancing, dedication ceremonies, vendors and lots of fantastic food. Hopefully we will be able to have it next year.

One event we were able to have was the annual Josh Palmer Cancer Foundation Golf Tournament. This event is hosted by Mark Twain Golf Course and staffed by volunteers from the Msgr. John J. Lee Division AOH. This year was one of the best in recent memory and we were able to raise over \$20,000 to be used for those undergoing cancer treatments in our area! Great job to all who participated.

We have used this down time to make some improvements to our clubhouse (abiding by social distancing, of course). We have painted our hall, refinished the hall floor, deep cleaned our kitchen and resurfaced our historic bar top. The members who volunteered for these tasks are to be congratulated, Thank you.

Our club house was open for the latter half of the summer and early fall, until last week. COVID finally caught up to our small rural area and began to spread. As of the writing of this article our clubhouse is mandated closed by New York State, as we are currently in an "Orange Zone" on our way to a "Red Zone". Hopefully this outbreak will pass soon and we will be back to normal malarkey with our brothers and friends. Be safe and God bless.

**Steuben County, Division 1 of the AOH**, Sons of Ireland Division, is located in Hornell, New York. President: Larry Vetter. Division Meetings are the First Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. American Legion, 72 Seneca St. Hornell, NY

The Division held its Annual Irish Open Golf Tournament on September 19th. The day started much like an Irish morning with some fog and frost that met the first flight of Golfers at 7:00 am. When the fog lifted, a clear blue sun lite sky burned off the frost as, Brother Scott Frearson, with his bagpipes serenaded the Canisteo Valley from the hilltop at Twin Hickory Golf Course. The Captain and Crew Tourney featured 2 flights of 18 four-man teams with the second flight beginning at 1:30. A food tent was manned by Brothers and our Sister LAOH throughout the Day. Due to the Covid restrictions no awards dinner was held. It was a large undertaking because of the pandemic, but a great success.

On Saturday, October 17 the Division held its annual members Road Bowling tournament. Seven 2-man teams participated while Brothers cheered them on. I have not received the official results, as I am sure there has been many a great discussion of the results. At least there was only 1 lost bowl, and no injuries.

The Division performed its annual fall cleaning of St. Ann's Cemetery on Saturday, October 24th. We are discussing additional fund-raising activities for December. The nomination committee is presently performing its duty to formulate a Slate of Officers for the upcoming two-year term. Elections will be held in December, with installation in January.

The Division will assist Our Lady of the Valley Parish with ushering for the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses. Due to the Covid restriction of 33% capacity, all masses will require reservations for attendance and no walk-ins will be allowed.

Our meeting in November included draping the Charter for our Brother, Ed Clancy who passed in late September.

## **District 8**

### **Jim Russell**

District 8 encompasses the counties of Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties.

#### **Orange County:**

The Orange County Board met on Sunday, November 8, 2020 at 2pm at Division #2 in Cornwall. I attended along with Cy Hughes and our esteemed State Vice President, John Manning.

Division updates:

Div. #1 mourns the loss of Brother Stephen O'Shea. Brother O'Shea hailed from Kenmare in County Kerry. He was very instrumental in starting the St. Brendan's Gaelic Football Club in Orange County. Stephen also led the Mid-Hudson St. Patrick's Parade in Goshen as Grand Marshal in 2014. May Stephen rest in peace.

Division #1 continues to support local food pantries. They plan to have a food pantry drive around Thanksgiving at the Shop Rite in Monroe. Their work in this charity continues this legacy of service bolstered for many years by Brother Marty Hogan.

Division #1 reports that they continue to open their hall to organizations to support Irish heritage and ture. Their hall is a meeting place for the AOH Pipe Band, Irish step dancing, LAOH Division #5, and the Mid-Hudson St. Patrick's Parade. Brother Neil O'Riordan spearheads the laudatory effort to make the hall accessible even during this time of pandemic crisis.

Division #2 held their very successful annual raffle recently. They worked very diligently to open their hall and grounds on October 10th for the annual event. They did this in a very prudent manner within the confines of the Covid restrictions.

Division #2 continues to hold their Irish Breakfast on the second Sunday of each month from 9am until noon.

Division 3# made plans for their first fundraiser. A golf outing was scheduled on October 30, 2020. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate! It snowed! The outing was to be held at the Hickory Hill Golf Course in Warwick. Brian McCabe, Division President received their division charter at the State Board Meeting from National Vice President, Sean Pender.

Division #4 plans to hold their November meeting at Division #2, date and time TBA. (The change to this hall has been necessitated because their regular meeting place at the Dikeman Firehouse in Goshen has been closed due to the pandemic.)

#### **Rockland County:**

Rockland County has not met because of Covid concerns.

Division 1, North Rockland has met via zoom and in person practicing social distance and 6 feet apart. Many divi-

sion events had to be canceled because of Covid.

Division 3, Pearl River has reported the following::

1. We have resumed our regular division meetings, albeit in a "hybrid format". We are conducting them live (with appropriate headcount limits, social distancing and masks), and also broadcasting via a Zoom link provided to our brothers. First meeting is in the books, with learnings, and they held their division meeting on Friday, October 23 at 8pm.
2. Our fall fundraiser will have a different look and feel due to the pandemic. Our very successful Pot of Gold has been cancelled and is being replaced by a 50/50 style drawing. The drawing will allow for a virtual event, and we have reduced the ticket prices - given the economic pressures on all and the lack of the Pot of Gold parties..

Division 5, Blauvelt has not met because their meeting venue has been closed because of Covid. Tom Leavey, Division President has almost completed the IRS process.

### **Sullivan County:**

Sullivan Brothers have continued to serve in our community as we evolve with COVID circumstances. This summer we transitioned from Zoom back to social-distancing monthly meetings. We continue to support our local parishes and community organizations that are suffering because of cancelled bazaars and other traditional fundraising events.

Sullivan County's own annual 'Half-way to St. Patrick's Day' golf outing was held on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. A good time was had by all!

### **Ulster County:**

Ulster County, Division 1 has not met because of Covid-19 concerns.

The annual Hooley on the Hudson which was scheduled for Sunday, September 6, 2020 was canceled because of Covid.

## **Freedom for All Ireland Martin Galvin**

While the current health crisis has held back many of our Freedom for all Ireland initiatives, it did not stop British injustice. The British used the lockdown as their opportunity to renege on the Stormont House Agreement, Brexit agreement, victim's pensions and legacy justice. Meanwhile groups doing vital FFAI work, with AOH support, were closed down or limited. They are counting on the AOH, more than ever, to give them the publicity, political support and financial help they badly need.

AOH FFAI must adapt and find new means to influence American and Irish politicians, contribute to justice groups in Ireland, impacting British policies, and setting the agenda for Irish American groups.

Health restrictions may block us from organizing speaking tours, but our national and state leaders have found new technologies to bring events like the transatlantic launch of ***PLASTIC JUSTICE*** to Hibernians across New York. After the election we will know who our elected representatives are and can target members of the administration or key Congressional committees for support on Irish issues. We have to find new approaches to continue our contributions in support of the Christmas Appeal grants.

## WEBINAR SPEAKING EVENTS

I expected to be speaking about plans for a new tour which could provide a speaker for some of our best Christmas Appeal events (like the Fr. Murphy Awards in Albany), follow-up on FFAI political issues post-election and help motivate more areas to support our FFAI political and fundraising initiatives.

Obviously we cannot not have a speaking tour at this time, planned fundraising events had to be cancelled. However we are now bringing speakers to you by webinar broadcasts.

Nearly 1500 Hibernians, led by National Presidents Danny O'Connell and Karen Keane, viewed the webinar broadcast launch of **PLASTIC JUSTICE**, a report by **Relatives for Justice**, which documents how British state forces used plastic bullets to kill 17 Irish people with impunity. The event made public newly uncovered British secret documents, written just before and after one of the killings, which will now be used by legal representatives of the Downes' family in their court battle for an inquest.

Three victims' relatives spoke. It was deeply moving even for those who were aware of the circumstances of these murders. One of the most important aspects of this event was that groups like **RfJ** invited the AOH to co-host the launch, because of our successes in bringing legacy justice issues to Congress. The launch has also been covered for three weeks by the **IRISH ECHO** and **VOICE**.

Last month, in a history making first, Hibernians across the state got to see speakers representing 17 Freedom for all Ireland grant recipients talk about their projects and hear why AOH-LAOH Christmas Appeal donations are so crucial. The event is now posted on our AOH site. In the past only the FFAI Chair and those few Hibernians able to get to Ireland saw these presentations. It was inspiring to hear these leading representatives. Hibernians can take pride in these Christmas Appeal grants.

At the same time what they said was deeply concerning. Many of the recipients spoke of our grants being a lifeline for them because of the impact of covid. For example, John Kelly the leader of the Bloody Sunday campaign, said the Museum of Free Derry relies on paid admissions by visitors, which were wiped out. Brian Cawley of Tyrone National Graves said the funds they use to care for the patriot graves and memorials in East Tyrone, comes from an annual fundraiser at Easter, which was cancelled. A number of other groups and centers were closed for months. The message seems clear. Our donations this year were crucial, but because the covid crisis continues, they desperately need us to come through for them next year.

## FFAI POLITICAL INITIATIVES

Last year at the request of AOH FFAI, the House Foreign Affairs Committee hosted a special briefing by Mark Thompson of Relatives for Justice and Professor Mark McGovern, only 9 days after Boris Johnson announced plans to stop prosecutions of British troopers during the 1969-98 conflict. Congressman Eliot Engel scheduled the briefing, attended by Congressmen, many Congressional aides, two observers from the Irish Embassy and an observer from the British Northern Ireland Office. Mark Thompson and Professor McGovern urged Congress, to take a lead along with Irish America and the Irish government in opposing a trooper amnesty which would be a political disaster and violation of the Good Friday agreement.

The British pay close attention to American Congressional scrutiny. FFAI was able to organize this hearing and also a series of Congressional letters to the British Ambassador. FFAI speakers from Ireland also help in AOH efforts to build up a network of Congressmen, who are aware of key FFAI issues and the importance of Irish issues to voters in their district. We are unfortunately losing key members like Eliot Engel and Peter King. We will soon have an opportunity to identify and approach key members in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Senate and administration elected from New York.

## STATE HONORS

New York State AOH and LAOH packed the Assembly and Senate galleries, after calling their elected officials to support resolutions about Ireland's 1918 vote for freedom and 1919 Declaration of Independence.

Last year working with State President Tom Lambert, State PEC Chair Liam McNabb Chair and former State FFAI Chair Ciaran Geraghty we were scheduled to return to Albany on April 21st, for state ceremonies remembering Terence MacSwiney, Kevin Barry and other Irish patriots who gave their lives during the Black and Tan War of 1920.

These ceremonies bring an awareness of our history to those who never heard of events like the Irish Declaration of Independence or understand their historical importance. They show our elected officials that they have to pay attention to Irish issues and the AOH. Thirdly at a time when the British and Unionists want to honor the six county state and partition, these ceremonies are a subtle reminder, they created the Orange State against a national vote for freedom, and Declaration of Independence and through a war using the Black and Tans to terrorize Ireland.

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, the death of Bobby Sands MP and nine others. The Hunger Strike and what it represented should be the theme of a state resolution in New York State and in cities and municipalities across the state and nation.

Resolutions can recall the contribution of AOH members under former State President John Egan and National Digest Editor Frank Feighery, among others who were instrumental in getting AOH banners and representatives at demonstrations across New York State in support of the Hunger Strikers every day from March 1st through October 3rd.

## CHRISTMAS APPEAL

The 2019-2020 Christmas Appeal was a record breaking success led by New York. A total of \$20,864 came from 37 New York State contributors to the Christmas Appeal. New York more than doubled the next highest state. We are not going to be able to hold some fundraising events which were a key part of the appeal. I am appealing to everyone around the state to try and make special collections so that we do not let these groups down at a time when they need our help the most.

Christmas Appeal grants are awarded to groups working for complete and absolute independence, peace and unity for all Ireland. Groups applying for donations from the FFAI Christmas Appeal must submit applications that include a question on how they promote freedom for all Ireland. The recipients and amounts were based on written applications and recommendations from the National FFAI Committee. Final determinations were made by our National officers.

Every designated donation to approved groups was honored and groups named for designated donations got additional monies because we wanted contributions to reflect your feelings.

New applications were approved for the Ballymurphy Families Committee, Bloody Sunday Trust (which oversees the Museum of Free Derry), Tyrone National Graves, and the Witness Project headed by Sean Murray.

Repeat recipients included -Relatives for Justice, Pat Finucane Centre, Holy Cross Ardoyne, EALU-(means Escape in Irish) is a center for Republican ex-political prisoners, New Lodge Commemoration Committee, Conway Mill Trust, Tyrone AOH, Cairde Strabane, St. Patrick Centre, Downpatrick, Duchas Oiriall-South Armagh, Bridges beyond Boxing, Belfast, Down Patriot Graves, Green Cross, Belfast National Graves, Omagh Basketball and Omagh Choir.

## 2021 Fact-Finding Tour

In 2019, Hibernians completed a highly publicized nine day fact-finding mission led by President Jim McKay and LAOH President Carol Sheyer and including leading Hibernians from 13 states.

In 2021, we are proposing a tour that would include meeting the families of all of the hunger strikers as well as discuss the continuing legacy and political meaning of the 1981 Hunger Strike today.

### **Pro Life Jack O'Brien**

It is December and each AOH Division will put forth a slate of officers to be elected. Remember to vote for the best, the most able, candidate in their proper office. It is not a popularity contest or just someone's turn to take the chair. Only through worthy leadership will our organization flourish. Also remind your board to select your Pro-Life Chairman.

Just as with your elected officers, it is critical to have a functioning Pro Life chair. Overall, in the USA, abortion is down from 2015 levels. We saw progress as National Leaders attended the March-For-Life, and abortionists have been required to have hospital affiliation. Additionally, Planned Parenthood was caught selling human tissue and fetal body parts, and in New York Assisted suicide has been put on hold. Although we have made some advances in the past few years, there is no guarantee of the same success in the years to come. Therefore, it is critical that every Hibernian be informed on respect life issues. They need to know how to lead their membership and what the Church advocates on particular issues. As well, they need to know what actions they are able to take in accordance with our order to be effective. To be most effective we all need to be on the same page.

For the November election, I asked that you remember everyone's inalienable right to life as you exercised your own right to vote. Now, as they wrap up who won, we have time to think of future elections. Remember, the oath you took with the AOH. It is your promise to espouse and promote pro-life causes.

### Life Comes First, Always!

The Economy, Immigration, Healthcare, Taxes, Euthanasia, Global Warming, and Assisted Suicide are still issues in the forefront of political talking points. There has been significant debate about political issues this election cycle (healthcare and racism, for example) in relation to abortion and which issues may influence your vote. When it comes to comparing politician's views on the moral principles, all abuses of human dignity are intrinsically evil, but attacks on human life must be viewed as the most egregious violation because the right to life is the most fundamental human right and the source of all other human rights.

“The U.S. bishops have reaffirmed that ‘the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed.’ While the USCCB did warn us not to ‘dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty,’ they did give priority to upholding and defending our brothers’ and sisters’ most basic right—to live.”

### Why should you think abortion is the pre-eminent issue?

1.) **Gravity:** Abortion is the deliberate act of taking an innocent human life making it intrinsically evil. Life cannot be restored once taken. This inalienable right is a non-negotiable moral principle and it is the most fundamental because one has no other rights if he has no life. All other affronts to human dignity are grave but they may be rectified and may still allow your other rights to be enjoyed. This is not possible when life is destroyed; And more,

most especially evil, when it is taken from the most innocent and vulnerable—those not yet born.

2.) **Magnitude:** The number of abortions performed every year in the U.S. exceeds any other cause of death. According to the CDC, heart disease was the leading cause of death in 2017 with 647,457 recorded in the U.S. There were 19,107 homicides and 47,173 suicides. At the same time, **862,320 abortions were reported** in the U.S. (and this number does not reflect all US abortions).

Now over 65 million human lives have been lost to abortion since 1973 in the U.S. alone. In comparison, death penalty executions in the U.S. since 1976 number 1,526. American soldiers killed in all American wars through 1991 is under 1.2 million. And fewer than 3,000 deaths by physician assisted suicide have been reported in the U.S. in states where it is legal (from 1998 to 2017). By far, even among the life issues, abortion demands our attention because the numbers of human lives lost is unrivalled.

3.) **Current danger:** Abortion is not a hypothetical threat to human life and the common good. It is a grave reality to both now. We need not conjecture or debate what might happen in the same way we would speculate on the possibility of nuclear war or the impact of climate change. Rather, we have the statistics already—and they are not good.

In 2020, there are no other issues that threaten human dignity, human life, and the common good more profoundly than abortion. So, even in the context of other serious and large-looming political issues, abortion is unquestionably the pre-eminent priority.

### **NATIONAL 'MARCH FOR LIFE- Washington D.C. January 2021**

The organizers have the [March for Life](#) scheduled in Washington on January 29, 2021. I ask the members to look into arranging travel to go to Washington DC. None of us can predict what covid-19 restrictions, if any, may be on the busses. By January, we may only be asked to maintain the social distancing rules. Please check with the Bus Captains you used in previous years. Many people will still travel by car/carpool as well. The National Board will be sending an e-Blast with their plans for the March For Life.

**Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Healthy 2021.**

**Veterans Affairs**  
**SSgt Patrick Gorman**  
**USMC retired.**

The VA has stopped the ability to apply for travel reimbursement at all the VA's by removing the machines and the paperwork from the VA itself. They have implemented a new system where you can do all of your travel claims online, although this may be a huge challenge to the older veterans who may not be technologically proficient. In addition, you are required to register under the DOS system with the phone number provided, which from experience is awful because by 0900 there is usually a 50 min wait time.

The VA is in the process of outsourcing all of its compensation and pension exams into the private sector due to a tremendous backlog, I however do not think this is wise as the private doctors did not have direct access to the VA medical records, and most have little to no experience with veterans.

Finally on a positive note the VA has processed more than half of all Blue water Navy disability claims, which is meant for Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange while on ship.

AOH member Ssgt. Nicholas Mocarski is still in the fight against our enemies in the Middle East and we hope to

have him home soon.

“Find the enemy that wants to end or corrupt American democracy and kill every one of them until they are so sick of the killings they leave forever” General "Mad dog" Mattis USMC

## **Webmaster**

**Kevin R. Cummings**

### **Website Posting Statistics:**

Nine (9) posts have been added to the website this past quarter which includes news items; state events; officer reports and historical happening items.

### **State Board Group Emails:**

Over the last quarter, ten (10) group email blasts were distributed to subscribers which include state officers, county and division presidents, and members of the Irish community across New York State. The blasts included information on state board events, seminars, FFAI and fundraising events, Irish Language Masses, past state officer death announcements and history calendar announcements.

### **Events Calendar:**

I recognize that the continuing and evolving COVID-19 rules have curtailed many in-person events around the state but please send me information on all your *virtual* division and county board events as soon as they are available. Please include any event flyers as well as specific viewing information, including time, location and especially contact information (phone number and email address).

### **State News Section:**

This is the area of the website where we can highlight all your local, county and state events once they have taken place. Simply remember to take at least 1 picture and send a short description of your event—an attendee screenshot of a Zoom/virtual event is acceptable. Remember to include a list of names (if feasible) for people in the photograph.

### **Social Media Communications:**

Our social media accounts continue to be active and are providing new and shared information about AOH and Irish cultural events around New York State. If you use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, please follow the AOH New York State Board pages and repost and share as we publish new information. This will help increase our online footprint as well as increase awareness of our virtual and in-person events and activities.

In closing, I would like to wish the entire Hibernian Family a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas and may God Bless and keep you all safe and healthy.

## **Editor**

**Tom McKenna**

Deadlines for The Empire State Hibernian are:

February 15<sup>th</sup> for the March 2021 issue

May 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 for the June 2021 issue.

Please submit all information through the appropriate officer, chairman or director.

Wishing all a Happy and Holy Christmas.

## **Charities & Missions**

### **Matt Buckley**

As we go into the “Holiday Season” a lot of us start the Christian Charity part of our order. Although I encourage you to do this throughout the year, now is a great time to start your food drives, clothing collections, fall and snow cleanups for the elderly to name a few. There are families who may not have the same income or job as last year due to the Covid-19 or other reasons and are in need of help. We can step up to do this with ease and help out the local established organizations who help them.

If you are just starting out, it is as simple as just asking what the pantries need. Have flyers made up with a good list of groceries, stand out front of a food market and hand them out. Particularly to this year with Covid-19 still running around rampant perhaps advertising and having a contactless Drive-Through Food Collection will help. Consider making deliveries for local soup kitchens, pantries, and churches.

Many times, it is not easy for members to raise monetary contributions, but that is not what it’s about. Your time and the acts of charity are what is important. Filling food pantries, working various soup kitchens, volunteering to help someone in need, spending time at your church doing their charitable endeavors all count towards our Motto of Christian Charity. Your time is reportable back at ***\$15 / hour / member***. Full grocery bags add up between \$18 and \$25 per bag! It adds up to be quite a bit at the end of the year. All I ask is that when you do this, you let it be known you are members of AOH and do this under the auspices of our AOH motto. Please, if you do not have a C/M Chairman to keep track of these things then designate one. Ultimately it falls on the Presidents shoulders for responsibility.

Which leads me to reminding everyone that submitting a report is not voluntary. Submitting a report is in our bi-laws and is due each calendar year no later than Jan 31<sup>st</sup> to both the STATE AND NATIONAL Boards. Email me with any questions, I want to help you.

## **Immediate Past President**

### **Victor J. Vogel**

I hope you and your families are well. Since the last NYS Boards Meeting, I have participated in the virtual National Convention. In addition, I notified President McKay in June that I would be resigning my Project St. Patrick's Chairmanship as of the Convention. The need to concentrate on Hibernian Charity at the local level has become very demanding and, at the same time, very rewarding. I want to thank the President McKay for the appointment and giving me the opportunity to be a part of his administration.

I have also attended Suffolk County Board Meetings and Division Seven Meetings. Since most Hibernian events have been cancelled due to the health crisis, many of our activities have been placed on assisting those most adversely affected by the present economic circumstances.

I would like to thank all of the Counties and Divisions around New York State for continuing to support the Irish Language Mass. It is an important part of preserving our Irish Culture. Be Safe and Stay Well.

## **Sports**

### **Michael Byrne**

I hope everyone is doing okay amidst the chaos between covid 19 and the elections. It is strange times indeed.

We need to remain strong and do whatever we can to promote our Irish heritage, culture, and faith. Unfortunately we had to cancel our James F Hayes golf classic in the spring. Our annual 7 side Thomas D. McNabb Gaelic football tournament was also put on hold. Our annual New York State Bowling Tournament will be rescheduled to

2021.

It is unfortunate these events have to be cancelled or rescheduled. The most important thing now is the health of our members families and friends. I'm hoping everything will be back to normal in 2021.

Congratulations to our state president Tom Lambert for a job well done.  
Wishing everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year.

## **Fund Raiser Calendar**

### **Peter Durkee**

With the current Pandemic keeping us away from having meetings and not being able to have a few cold ones with one and other, I hope this letter finds you all healthy. I hope you feel the way I do that by promoting this years (2021) Calendars we can help preserve our Irish Heritage and continue to support all the many Hibernian Charities that need our help throughout the year.

As you will see Mike has done another great job on the calendars again this year, not only about things that happen in Ireland but facts and information about our owe history and the Irish men who fought for our independence from England. These Calendars are so nice you can use them as a reference or your kids class work or home work, and you still can win money every day. The Directors have had the Calendars since early August, enough time to get to the county and Division Presidents.

Now it's our turn to take up the ball and run with it the more we sell the more we're able to donate to the Hibernian charitable works during the year.

**Last year we sold 801 calendars between the men and ladies, can we make it 900 this year????**

### **Liaison Jack Ryan**



#### **Our Lady of Revelation Tre Fontane, Rome, Italy**

“The message of Fatima continues”  
April 1937, 1947, through today

“Miracle of the Sun”  
Tre Fontane, Rome, Italy  
1980, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1987

AOH - LAOH  
SUFFOLK COUNTY HIBERNIANS  
*Reminder, pray the rosary for world peace!*

Watch "Our Lady of Revelation part 1- Intro & Conversion of Bruno"

<https://youtu.be/o3aledB9Owc>

"Our Lady of Revelation part 2: The Messages & Visions"

<https://youtu.be/8vjmPDY0avw>

**2021 NYS Convention Committee**  
**Bob Bunce**

Despite the uncertainty of what Covid or safety restrictions we may be facing this summer, the 2021 NYS AOH/LAOH Convention Committee has been hard at work on this important biennial event.

The convention is scheduled for Wednesday July 7<sup>th</sup> - Saturday July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021. It is to be held at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, 100 East Onondaga Street, Syracuse, New York 13202 (Formerly the Hotel Syracuse).

The convention website, [www.nys2021syr.com](http://www.nys2021syr.com), is a work in progress; information will be added as it becomes available. The link to reserve rooms is active and you may book now until 6/21/21 at the convention rate of \$135 per night.

Let us all pray that the difficulties we have been facing these past months will resolve in a way that allows us to come together, safely, in the unity and fellowship that typifies our Order.



The New York State Board wishes all a Merry and Holy Christmas and a Safe, Prosperous and Healthy New Year.

During these hectic and uncertain times, find a few moments to reflect on the true meaning of the Christmas Season. May God's Blessings be on all.